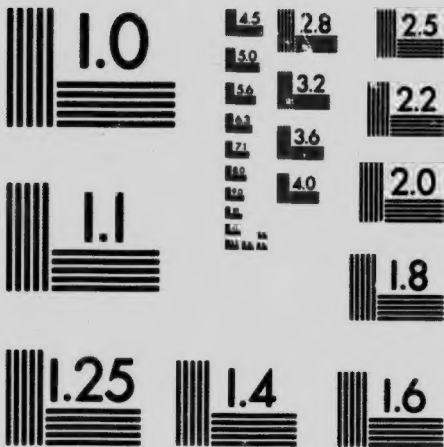




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A PLEA FOR A COSMOPOLITAN NEWSPAPER AND THE ABOLITION OF PARTY.

Major W. T. Tassie's Reply to the Toast to the
Memory of Dr. Tassie, formerly Principal of Galt
Collegiate Institute, at its Semi-Centennial, 18th
July, 1902.

If I had no other duty before me than to express my gratification at the manner in which the old scholars of the Collegiate Institute have exhibited their loyalty to its traditions, to the present and former masters, and to the memory of Dr. Tassie, I should merely have to perform a service that might very properly devolve upon any of you, and yet it would be as presumptuous for me not to acknowledge my inability, compared with any of you, to do justice to this toast, as it would be ungracious in me not to recognize your loyalty to the memory of Dr. Tassie in proposing it, and your extreme courtesy to myself in associating my name with it. But, while I desire to thank you most sincerely and heartily for thus honouring the memory of Dr. Tassie, I feel in a measure precluded from passing any eulogy upon him by reason of my relationship to him. Nevertheless, if in touching on the vocation he followed and its associations, and in presenting a plea for a Great Cosmopolitan Newspaper as the educational need of the world, a thought should escape me, the germ of which was sown by my kinsman and teacher years ago, let it be received as an unpremeditated tribute to him, for I am well assured in my own mind that such a thought will be a worthy one. As the son of Daedalus handled the wax and the feathers not knowing that they were for his future flight, so we as boys pursued studies here not knowing their future significance. But we must now acknowledge that we were taught by the high standards of all of our teachers that the objects of education are to reach rational conditions of life and to set up some standard for ourselves. That is its object with us as it was with the ancients. Greece borrowed ideas from the different mythologies of her colonies which culminated in different philosophies intended to be the standards of life and the bonds of society, as Britain is borrowing ideas from her colonies to-day with a view to Imperial Federation, and it is worth while remembering that the early teachers of the world placed humanity under obligations centuries before the Christian Church, which founded the monas-

teries and was a great educational force, did anything for the race. It is to teachers like Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle that mankind owes the stupendous transition from barbaric or embryonic life to new principles, to spiritual reflection and ethical thought. But, however broad or cosmopolitan a reformer's ideal may be, the ever-changing conditions of society render new remedies necessary. So that while we must acknowledge our obligations to reformers and educationists of the past as each has done something towards elevating mankind from a state of slavery and social prescription to self-reliance and social freedom, and in maintaining the standards reached or in reaching out for loftier heights, the question for us is what should we do to meet the dangers confronting us.

While 't is true that nearly all reforms have met with the derision of the learned and ignorant alike, it is, nevertheless, true that no great movement in the history of mankind has ever taken place unless under the inspiration of some grand ideal. Even in fable Minos could not restrain the flight of a mortal, and the far-famed sons of Neptune piled Ossa on Olympus and Pelion on Ossa to reach the heavens which they would have accomplished had they not been cut off in their prime, and the launching of a great non-partisan paper on the world and carrying it from one country to another until it encircles the globe is not by any means a small idea, although it is not without favourable economic aspects. But what are the dangers existing or the dangers that threaten? In some cases, but not in all, the modern Trust is one—the modern Trust which stretches out its greedy arms through every public avenue, the assaults of Labour on Capital where municipal and national interests are threatened, the combinations of Capital where the natural rights of humanity seem jeopardized, the issue by half a dozen Governments instead of one and that under the most rigid inspection and safeguards for the public of charters to public corporations, the abuse of the Royal Prerogative at the behest of scheming and audacious coteries, political thugs who are unworthy of even the name of politicians, the alienation from the Crown of vast properties of unknown wealth to political partizans (not that I am attacking any particular party) and, in short, the worship of wealth, power and place by the human family, for, notwithstanding all we may say to the contrary, we really deceive ourselves when we assert that we hold in the highest honour those who find satisfaction in moral action. If Epicureanism added no new element to cosmopolitan life or to the education of Greece, its bond, at least, was friendship. But what does this materialistic age of confusion and despair offer save universal antagonism or universal apathy, instead of universal sympathy and an allegiance to a religion many regard as a system of philosophy, and many use as a political lever which they hawk in the marts to the highest bidder and accept the awards thus secured as symbols of personal merit, while the great leaders and their followers, loudly proclaiming their patriotism and purity, openly avow in private conversation that they have secured, by venal promises, a large section of the electorate, apparently ignorant that they are announcing their own corruption? What is to be gained by guiding children into spheres of morals and religion and teaching them high problems in ethics and theology if we make no practical provision for their future guidance that the exigencies of the times demand, when we see that after all the toil and struggle the awards of life are given to those who repudiate the very principles taught in the schools and universities? If our education is not to serve us in our relations with each other in practical life it is like water drawn from a well in sieves. In my day at this school, as at Rugby, Westminster and great schools in England, a Court of Honour existed

which prescribed temporary ostracism against boys guilty of shabby conduct, and are we to demand a lower standard from the man than from the boy? I think I am justified in asserting that a formative power for honour, truth, generosity and courage prevailed here, and that the old scholars of this school and of the man whose memory you honour by this toast, as a class have been distinguished as gentlemen in their relations with their fellows in after life.

Among the ancient Greeks it was only those who could contemplate the ideal as the end of life who were regarded as gentlemen, and we saw the result of their education scarcely less in the fact that their athletes travelled long distances to win a simple wreath of olive, laurel, ivy or pine, than in the equity displayed in the great speeches of their lawyers and statesmen, and at sterner moments, by Miltiades at Marathon and Themistocles at Salamis. It is true that this school has contrived several thousand men to the different vocations of life, but where are the scholars of the man whose name you delight to honour? Would that I could compass all who passed beneath the lintel of his door, from that first priest who sought the secret in the crypt of Time, to that supremely-gifted man, his last matriculant, who caught the music of a far-off shore—some old forefather on a sunlit hill Nature had dowered with legacies of song—and in the melody of marriage psalms brought back in that old church the half-veiled past, till strong men proved once more love is divine, but not too sweet for tears.* Many who spent the balmy days of their fresh youth amid these scenes have sailed with well-trimmed craft the voyage of life's sea, and passed to shores from which no record comes. But many are still to the fore.

Twenty-two years ago Crozier rose as a star of the first magnitude in the literary firmament and won the admiration of such illustrious observers as Carlyle and Herbert Spencer. He is making his way in the realms of philosophy and is approaching the sun, and may yet win immortality for himself and his teacher as Cicero, Philip of Macedon, Alexander the Great, Demosthenes, and many of the ancients did for their teachers. Wright, Scrimgeour, Cody, Bannatine, are in College Chairs, Strang and several others are Principals of Schools, Buchanan is known beyond the borders of his State for humanitarian work not less than in banking and positions of trust, Eagan in great financial affairs in the West, Hebden and many others in banking.

Old scholars are to be found among the judges, lawyers, legislators, physicians, engineers, merchants, manufacturers, brokers, army, navy and militia officers, and in the Civil Service. In the field, Leonidas, at Thermopylæ, did not exhibit a finer manhood to his countrymen the Lacedæmonians than Bruce Carruthers, on the open veldt at Hart's River, gave to Canada, to the Empire, to the world. Under those African skies the brave and the gallant Perry passed to the immortals, and only a short time before the name of the genial and fearless Laurie was enrolled.

But no nobler or more chivalrous spirit ever left this school than the late D. J. Macdonnell, who as a sensitive little fellow matriculated at Queen's College, Kingston, where he came out ahead at his examinations and won a scholarship. It would be impossible to do justice in a few words to the singularly lovable and commanding character of that young enthusiast, who soon addressed himself to higher things, and was known far and wide not less for his sublime sympathy and exalted piety than for his learning, and who afterwards evinced the genuine spirit of liberty as the fearless and eloquent expon-

* It was noticed that many of the old scholars were affected to tears by Mr. Knowles' address in the church in the morning.

ent of equal rights in opposition to ecclesiastical predominance in State affairs. The stake that he fought for did not require timid champions, and the cause that he wrought for is that divine sovereignty of the will that issues in freedom, not license. All who knew him claimed him. Taen surely we, as we resign him to Time as the great Canadian apostle of self-sacrifice and love, may say of him and of other worthies, "These trophies belong to us, these monuments are ours, these triumphs are ours."

"But follow on the gleam
Of the ancient splendid dream
That has made good for its fabric, perfection for its theme."

And let this reunion of hearts and of hands be a pledge under some splendid star of a loyal-hearted friendship for mutual assistance in the future whenever honest worth presents a claim so that even the sons and grandsons of the men of to-day may salute each other after the manner of Telemachus and the son of Nestor. "We profess ourselves to be acquaintances from the friendship of our fathers."

But this is a gleam of sunshine across a somewhat cloudy sky. I assert that as a people we worship wealth, power and place, and often degenerate into a species of flunkiesism in the pursuit of precedence and social position, without making any effort towards the cultivation of those qualities that should command it or give us the reserve force to be happy without it. The gods and demigods of wealth have arisen before whose arrogance, greed and pampered selfishness all bow in the dust, which neither contributes to the happiness of the people nor to the strength of the State.

Is there no Prometheus desiring the welfare of mankind who will carry a torch through the mists that surround us and scale the unexplored heights of a new Olympus, luminous, unclouded, radiant? We leave the schools, and subscribe to a materialistic code which holds all in bonds, for we have no great, independent, daily, non-partisan paper to enlighten us from day to day, but a press that is slavish to party and chained to it with links of gold. Behind that press, behind that party are the great monarchs of finance, who can and who do drive men homeless when they raise their voices against corruption.

Editors should be the high priests of the twentieth century, carrying the credentials of justice and liberty and proclaiming the highest standard of ethics, encouraging agriculture, commerce and science, establishing an authentic taste in art and architecture, advocating compulsory arbitration between a substantial number of strikers and corporations using the public franchise, encouraging discussions on the defence and commercial federation of the Empire and not preaching one doctrine in one province and another doctrine in another province, defending the rights of the public, of public servants and officials—civil and military—the rights of labor and of capital, and supporting the best men at all times, in all places, under all circumstances and at all hazards, independent of praise or blame, gain or loss, cliques or factions, sectional or class prejudices, high priests rendered independent by permanent and adequate salaries, who will investigate with the zeal of antiquaries, and who having only the right to defend will defend it with the faith of Crusaders and the courage of Paladins, high priests who will pull down our idols of gold and silver and replace them with some ideals that shall thrill the heart of humanity and carry us on to a new cycle.

Ever since the days of the Cavaliers and Roundheads who ultimately merged into the Tories and Whigs in England, the Conservatives and Reform-

ers in Canada, we have had two parties and a great Third Party vibrating and oscillating between the two, but never passing permanently to either because both are extreme. This great Third Party has never had any beacon to look to, never had any paper to investigate for them or present its views to the public. Why should one-half or all the people of this or of any other country be without a paper that will present to them the plain unadorned truth they wish to see? There has been no question before the people of this country for the last half century that could not have been discussed without partisan views and approached as an ordinary Board of Trade would have discussed it and no question need ever arise that cannot be discussed in the same manner.

The invention of printing was a great educational force, but the party press as such is as dead as the Rhapsodists of Greece or the Minstrels of Ireland and Scotland who performed the functions of teachers and moulded the characters of the people; it is as dead as Feudalism and the Order of Chivalry which were founded on principles of obligation and discipline, and out of which arose rights and duties; it is as dead as the Reformation which stirred the spirits of men to self-reliance and civil freedom; for it is as dead as the dead themselves, not that I think these forces have entirely ceased, for I believe you cannot walk across the stone-paved street without leaving the impress of your feet to all eternity. And the life of this man whose memory you have honoured by this toast, is not confined to the theatre in which it was enacted. It is not confined to you or to me who were his scholars, but extends itself to those relations with which we are brought in touch and continues in an endless and expanding continuity because the principles he taught had the fundamental essentials of excellence and permanence.

Time will not permit me to take a survey of the different countries demanding a cosmopolitan paper as an educational force, from Italy where since the days of Cavour and Stella and the great men who made that kingdom the derided Socialist is fighting the battle of liberty for the lower orders of society and demanding the abolition of bribery among the upper classes, across Europe to America where the Anarchist, the offspring of misrule, has raised his ghastly head. But if it is not established by private enterprise—and immortality awaits the man who does establish it—the time will come when the Nations of the world will demand, in the name of liberty, economy and education, its establishment and maintenance at the public expense, absolutely and permanently free from Government control or interference, like our Courts of Law, and it will be the greatest economic measure any Government can adopt.

For if the Apostle Paul could revisit the earth to denounce the iniquities that Partyism wallows in on this continent, from the selling of public honours, emoluments and contracts, to making cowardice, poltroonery and mendacity — so gross that it cannot receive any accession of infamy from perjury itself — a precedent for military command and power, he would be driven from our churches for want of sympathy and be received with the same contempt he met at Athens and Philippi. It is our only defence, our only salvation. Trampled and defrauded humanity from the beginning of the world has cried out for justice, and Justice is as immutable and as imperishable as Time itself. She is as fair and as exempt from decay as at creation's dawn. In her immortality she is secure from any wrong that man can do, no tongue can defame, no hand pollute her. She is not wooed by blandishments, nor won by flattery, nor bribed by feasts, nor does she follow the rich, for she follows none that all may follow her. The child of the ragman and the child of the king are given her benediction with equal fervour, for honour and truth are cherished by her and dwell in her temple.

Shall she who reigned in the early twilight of the Christian era, in the

lofty temples of Greece and Rome, in the shadowy realms of ancient fable and in fields unknown to song or story, as the august, invisible being under whose laws all life upon the shores of time must seek reward, not flourish here? Have Honour, justice and brotherhood lost their power over the souls of men? Have we forgotten that we must rise with the sun in our daily strife against corruption, spoliation and wrong in public and private service? Have we forgotten—have we forgotten the dream—the vision—the magnificence—the splendour in the past? I thought we were freemen! I thought we were Britons who claimed kinship with those great pillars of the State who laid the keystone of British liberties—Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, and William, Earl of Pembroke! I thought we were freemen who claimed kinship with those great Englishmen whose names are linked with the fortitude we claim so much to admire—Hampden and Pym! I thought it was only creatures with the passiveness of sheep, who would tamely submit to arbitrary spoliation, either in private or public service, "permit others to do so.

Are we so unmanned that we will kiss the chains, so dispirited that we will munch the husks of unrequited service either in public or private? I thought that the era of vassalage and degraded citizenship had passed, and that under the rising sun of the twentieth century we might see the dawning light of a new day of enlightened aims that should usher in some prophet, priest or king among men, filled with the vision of a more perfect state, who would set up some standard for the people and touch the sublime realities of individual and social life, and give to this land some grand ideal as a heritage—some example of self-sacrifice that shall remain for us, some example of devotion to truth and duty for our posterity, some example of the courage that glorifies itself in the defence of our rights—the matchless, crowning courage that defies the hatred and contemns the friendship of the wrongdoer and of all who sympathize with him till the wrong at least is effaced—some example of the wisdom that conforms to equity and reason, and holds no law, no institution, no decree, no ordinance of man too sacred for criticism, and no restriction tolerable save where it involves the equal rights of others—some example of the spirit that sweeps aside assumption and prerogative of inane and autocratic cliques and awards the palm of merit to the most worthy—some example of the pride, the luminous pride that evinces itself in exalted patriotism and consecrated justice—the only divine and imperishable guarantees of our liberties.

